

LEADERSHIP ISSUES CONCERNING THE LOS ANGELES CITY FIRE DEPARTMENT (LAFD)

Executive Leadership

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ABSTRACT

This research project analyzed the factors surrounding successful leadership and surveyed Los Angeles City Fire Department (LAFD) members as to their perception of leadership abilities of LAFD officers..

The problem encountered on the LAFD was the perception of a lack of leadership abilities and leadership training.

The purpose of this research paper was to identify successful leadership styles, traits, and characteristics, and ascertain if a dissatisfaction existed with leadership on the LAFD. If so, identify key issues and what could be done to correct the situation.

The research methods employed in this research were historical and descriptive. Historical research was used to identify leadership types, characteristics, and traits. Descriptive research was utilized to assess satisfaction with the leadership abilities of LAFD officers.

The research questions used were as follows:

- What is the definition of leadership?
- What leadership theories and concepts exist?
- What are the traits and characteristics of an effective leader?
- How are the leadership abilities of LAFD officers perceived by LAFD members?
- What if anything should or could be done to increase leadership abilities on the LAFD?

The principle procedure employed was to review the appropriate literature, survey the members of the LAFD, and compile the information necessary to correct the problem or negate the perception.

The results showed that overall members were satisfied with the leadership abilities of officers except for the Chief Engineer. Therefore, the perception of members not being satisfied with the leadership abilities of officers on the LAFD did not come to fruition. However, results in certain areas showed marginal satisfaction with leadership abilities and indicated an improvement in leadership skills should be accomplished. The survey identified the best way to do this is to hire and promote qualified individuals, and to have formal training in leadership and people skills. In addition, certain leadership traits and characteristics were identified as being important in a leader. These traits and characteristics were corroborated by the literature reviewed.

Recommendations were made to conduct an all-inclusive leadership survey and identify areas of leadership that officers can improve upon. Then formalized training should be done to ensure officers are given the opportunity to increase these leadership skills and improve their relationships with subordinates. Lastly, provide this leadership training on a continued basis.

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INTRODUCTION

Leadership continues to be one of the most important aspects of the fire service. Its importance is obvious in successful organizations as well as unsuccessful ones. What makes good leaders? What traits or characteristics do good leaders possess? What leadership styles are effective? These are all questions that are asked again and again. Many studies have been conducted to come up with an answer.

Leadership in the fire service may be even more critical than the private industry because the lives of firefighters and the citizens they serve depend on it. These leaders not only have to function effectively and efficiently conducting routine duties, they must provide effective leadership in emergency situations.

Leadership discussions on the Los Angeles City Fire Department (LAFD) have probably been ongoing since the department's inception. Recently there have been concerns of a lack of leadership abilities. Firefighters express concerns about the leadership abilities of their Captains, Captains express concerns about their Chiefs, and Chiefs express concerns about their Captains. In addition, the political climate has the Chief Engineer's motives and leadership abilities in question.

The problem appears to be a perceived dissatisfaction with the leadership abilities of the officers on the LAFD.

The purpose of this research paper is to identify successful leadership styles, traits, and characteristics, and ascertain if a dissatisfaction exists with leadership abilities on the LAFD. If it exists, what the key issues are, and what can be done to correct the situation.

The research methods employed in this research are historical and descriptive. Historical research was used to identify leadership theories, styles, characteristics, and traits. Descriptive research was utilized to assess satisfaction with the leadership abilities of officers on the LAFD.

The research questions used were as follows:

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BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

As with any fire department, the LAFD has its problems. Currently, the members of the department seem to perceive a leadership problem from within. This problem spans all officer ranks and goes both directions in the chain of command. Non-officer ranks seem to have a lack of confidence in the leadership of the officers. This lack of confidence starts at the top of the organization and permeates to the immediate supervisor levels. Each level of the chain of command seems to think that other levels lack some leadership skills.

Some members attribute this problem to the lack of an adequate testing process and the lowering of standards. Others say that it is a sign of the times and that

dedication and commitment to duty is a thing of the past. Still others feel that leadership training is needed and education is the key.

The LAFD has about 2800 members and covers a city of approximately 460 square miles. There are five bureaus: Emergency Services, Human Resources, Fire Prevention, Support Services, and Fire Prevention. Emergency services are conducted by 106 fire stations divided into three divisions and sixteen battalions.

Such a large organization requires an effective and efficient command structure. Within this command structure needs to be capable leaders. These leaders need the abilities that will instill trust and confidence in the members they supervise and the public they serve. Without this proper leadership, the department will not be able to compete in the next millennium.

The problem encountered by the LAFD is not an isolated one. Many other departments and organizations are presented with the same predicament. This problem has a direct relationship to the Executive Leadership course content. The course content dealt directly with leadership characteristics and traits. In turn, this research had practical application to a specific department.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The definition of leadership is a very subjective issue. There are as many definitions for leadership as there are leaders. Robert F. Kennedy defined leadership as “inspiring people to exercise their best qualities.” (Goldbach, 1989) Dwight D. Eisenhower defined it as “the art of getting someone else to do what you want done – because he wants to so it.” (ibid)

Author George R. Terry says, “Leadership is the activity of influencing people to strive willingly for group objectives. Robert Tannenbaum, Irving R. Weshler, and Fred Massarik define leadership as “interpersonal influence exercised in a situation and directed, through the communication process, toward the attainment of a specialized goal or goals.” (Hersey and Blanchard, 1988)

Still other writers have defined leadership as the initiation of acts that result in a consistent pattern of group interaction directed toward the solution of mutual problems; the process of influencing group activities toward the setting and achievement of goals; and an influence process, the dynamics of which are a function of the personal characteristics of the leader and the followers and of the nature of the specific situation (Hitt, Middlemist, and Mathis, 1983). Still other experts believe leadership is the process whereby one individual influences other group members toward the attainment of defined group or organizational goals (Greenberg, 1995).

Whatever the definition of leadership, they seem to have three aspects that are the same. First, leaders must have followers. Second, leaders have more influence over followers than vice versa. Third, the object of leadership is to achieve group goals.

Therefore a general summary definition for leadership is an activity that consists of influencing other people's behavior, individually and/or as a group, toward the achievement of desired objectives (Hitt, et al., 1983).

Being an effective leader is especially difficult in the fire service because of its unique situation. You have a semi-military organization that develops a special camaraderie and closeness, and risk their lives together under tremendous physical and mental stress (Goldbach, 1989).

The fire service needs strong and effective leadership as does any organization. An organization is a reflection of its leadership. No fire service organization can be successful unless its officers are just as aware of leadership fundamentals as they are of fire strategy and tactics (Reipe, 1989). In 1989, Reipe discussed the qualities of a successful leader in Firehouse magazine. Mr. Reipe indicated that a list of qualities for successful leaders would be:

- Dedication- a sense of mission
- Human touch- compassion, empathy
- Command presence- appearance, demeanor
- Professional competence- accomplished
- Loyalty- commitment to others
- Humility- modesty
- Impartiality- fairness
- Cheerful optimism- positive attitude

These qualities are not exclusive, nor are they all possessed by all leaders. Some leaders are stronger in one area than another. However, leaders that are weak in some

areas can improve and a good leader recognizes this. Reipe concludes that the outlook for the fire service appears promising if we can provide the appropriate leadership.

Because the fire service is a semi-military organization, military leadership and its impact is also important. The United States Marine Corps (USMC) has long been an example of successful leadership. In a Marine Corps Gazette article, Brown (1992) wrote that there are two traits a commander must foster before members can trust each other without reservation. These traits are moral courage and mutual respect.

Moral courage means to “do the right thing” despite consequences and pressures to do otherwise. The article went on to say there are three methods of fostering moral courage. The first is to make sure the members of a command know there are right and wrong absolutes. The second method is group leadership discussions in which a leader can communicate his or her commitment to values. Finally, there is leadership by example. A leader must set the example, excellence must start at the top. Decisions cannot be based on selfishness.

Mutual respect means the ability to respect others and recognize that each person is unique and has the potential to contribute to the improvement of society. There are three ways to promote mutual respect. First, leaders must set the example. The do as I say and not as I do concept does not hold water. One must practice what they preach. Second, prevent the formation of cliques while at the same time being sensitive to ones heritage. Lastly, see what the members have to say. Many times leaders solicit the input of members and have no intention of using it. Others get opinions from members but do not listen to what they have to say. Erwin Rommel once said, “The ordinary soldier has a surprisingly good nose for what is true and what is false.” (Brown, 1992)

Another Marine Corps officer, Brigadier General Paul K. Van Riper wrote in the Marine Corps Gazette about the philosophy of leadership. In 1992, General Van Riper explained that it is a leader's responsibility to provide for an environment where there is a strong sense of belonging. One that gives the member a sense that he/she has a special calling and not an occupation or job. Also, leaders should not let the declining values of society set the standard for an organization. General Van Riper also describes the necessity of an officer to focus their efforts on the welfare of the organization and not their careers. A leader's concern must be for the concern of each member as individuals, their welfare should be his or her preoccupation. If one marine is let down, the Corps is let down. Commandant of the Marine Corps John A Lejeune told marines, "the relationship between officers, non-commissioned officers, and enlisted men should in no sense be that of superior and inferior nor that of master and servant, but rather that of teacher and scholar." (Van Riper, 1992) The article further describes the necessity of a leader possessing integrity. Without this trait the author feels that a leader cannot function. Finally leadership must be a way of life, set the example, live the example.

Leadership has been the subject of lots of research and the studies continue today. Prior to the 1950's, leadership studies were mostly based on the "Great Man" theory and the "Trait Approach" (Goldbach, 1989). The "Great Man" theory conveyed the vision that leaders are born and not made. The "Trait Approach" took the stance that successful leaders possessed certain traits.

The "Great Man" theory was pretty narrow and it did not allow for improvement or learned attributes. The "Trait Approach" stated that successful leaders possess key traits that set them apart from most other human beings. This theory indicates that these

traits remain stable over time and across different groups. In addition, the theory goes on to say that leaders share these traits regardless of when and where they lived, or the precise role in history they fulfilled. However, decades of research did not produce an agreed upon list of traits other than leaders tend to be taller and more intelligent than their followers (Greenberg and Baron, 1995).

Because of the lack of dramatic results, researchers concluded that leaders do not differ from followers in consistent and clear ways. Most of this research was conducted prior to 1960 and this position was usually accepted as true. However, recent studies and evidence show that leaders actually do differ from other people in several important and measurable aspects. Kirkpatrick and Locke came to the conclusion that traits do matter (Greenberg and Baron, 1995). Their list of traits are:

- Drive- desire for achievement
- Honesty and integrity- trustworthy
- Leadership motivation- exercise influence over others; shared goals
- Self-confidence- trust in own abilities
- Cognitive ability- intelligence
- Knowledge of business- knowledge of industry; technical
- Creativity- originality
- Flexibility- adapting

Kirkpatrick and Locke conclude that regardless if leaders are born or made, they possess certain traits that set them apart from other people. They indicate that leadership is demanding and difficult, and requires the “right stuff”, therefore the individual does

matter. Being in the right place at the right time is not the answer to all leadership scenarios.

A study by R.M. Stogdill in 1974, identified five physical traits, four intelligence and ability traits, sixteen personality traits, six task-related characteristics, and nine social characteristics. All of these related to a person's ability to lead (Goldbach, 1989). The article did qualify the traits by saying that not all leaders possessed all the traits and there were non-leaders that possessed some of the traits. Stogdill studied 124 research projects carried out between 1904 and 1947. In addition, he studied 163 projects carried out between 1948 and 1970. Critics of Stogdill's conclusions note leaders that are successful in one situation, such as a railroad crew, may not be successful in another situation, such as a bank or an air force squadron. These situational approach proponents feel this makes trait approach theories worthless (Hampton, Summer, and Webber, 1982).

The behavioral approach to leadership says that leadership is based on the kinds of actions or behaviors that leaders engage in. Social scientists began to look at this approach in the early 1950's because of the difficulties encountered in the trait approach (Hampton, et al., 1982).

A person-oriented versus a production-oriented approach was the subject of two studies, one in Ohio and one in Michigan. These studies showed that leaders differ greatly along these two dimensions (Hersey and Blanchard, 1988).

The Ohio Studies sifted through the leadership behavior actions and narrowed it down to two distinctions between leaders, initiation of structure and consideration. Initiation of structure concerned the actions the leader took to get the job done. This includes such things as deadlines, tasks, etc. The consideration is the action the leader

took toward the human consideration of his/her subordinates. This includes such things as adjusting work schedules and empathizing with employees.

The Michigan Studies identified two concepts of leadership effectiveness; employee-orientation and production-orientation. If a leader is employee-oriented, they stress relationship aspects of the job. These leaders feel everyone is important and accept the individuality and needs of their employees. The production-oriented leader emphasizes the technical and production aspects of the job. Employees are tools to accomplish the goals of the organization.

These two studies showed that leader behavior and not traits made the difference for successful leaders. The studies also indicated that considerate behavior almost always produces a more satisfied employee and that initiating structure seems to increase productivity (Hampton, et al., 1982). The two studies also seem to indicate that a leader did not excel in both behaviors. One was either autocratic or participative. More modern research has shown that this is not necessarily the case. Skillful leaders can combine both of these orientations into their overall styles and produce favorable results (Blanchard and Hersey, 1988).

Participative and autocratic are two contrasting styles of leadership. In the past studies such as mentioned above seemed to view these styles at opposite ends of a spectrum. However, Muczyk and Reimann indicate that they actually involve two different dimensions (Greenberg and Baron, 1995). The two dimensions are as follows;

- Autocratic-democratic - the extent leaders allow subordinates to take part in decision-making
- Permissive-directive - the extent leaders direct the activities of subordinates and tell them to carry out their jobs

Muczyk and Reimann determined that combining these two variables produced four possible patterns, directive autocrat, permissive autocrat, directive democrat, and permissive democrat. All four patterns seem to have advantages and disadvantages. No single leadership style is best under all conditions and all situations (Greenberg and Baron, 1995).

Another leadership model deals with the topic of if all leaders treat their subordinates the same. Graen and his associates looked into this aspect of leadership behavior by the leader-member exchange (LMX) model. This model says that different leaders have different relationships with various groups of subordinates. This is in contrast to other theories in which group leadership is in terms of similar action toward all subordinates. The LMX model indicates that there is an “in-group” and a “out-group”. “In group” members receive more of the leaders resources and time. The “out-group” receive fewer resources and is not in favor with the leader. LMX theory says that members of “in-groups” are expected to perform better and have more positive attitudes. This is supported by research and suggest that the relationship between leaders and their followers can strongly affect morale, commitment, and performance (Greenberg and Baron, 1995).

The attribution approach to leadership deals with what leaders attribute to their follower’s performance. In other words what is the underlying cause of the good or poor performance. Usually this is done for poor performance. After the cause is identified leaders pursue a course of action. This approach suggests that the leader’s behavior is sort of a cause-effect relationship. The leader deals with the causes of ones performance to determine his/her action.

Transformational leadership refers to a leader providing social, political, economic, or organizational change. They do this through their charisma. Charisma means gift in Greek. These transformational or charismatic leaders are evident in history. People such as Franklin Roosevelt and Martin Luther King Jr. were transformational leaders.

What characteristics make up these leaders has long been a topic of discussion. Although transformational leadership may at first sound like the trait approach or the great person theory, it is not. Transformational leader traits play a role but the primary focus is on the special relationship the leader has with his/her followers. The focus is more on the reactions of the followers as it is on the traits of the leaders (Greenberg and Baron, 1995).

Transactional leaders provide a vision or at least articulate one. But rather than stopping there, they have a plan for attaining their vision. These leaders also provide the framework for the vision, in other words they define the purpose and give the organization meaning. Transformational leaders also provide a willingness to take a risk and put everything on the line. They have self-confidence, concern for their followers, good communication skills, and the ability to read others. But transformational leadership is not only the ability to inspire people, they as leaders make their vision seem as a reality for tomorrow.

Contingency theories are based on the assumption that no one leadership style is preferred and that the specific conditions dictate what style will be effective at any given time. Although contingencies differ sharply, they all have two things in common. The

first is that they all subscribe to a contingency approach and the other is all are concerned with leadership effectiveness.

Fred E. Fiedler developed the LPC (esteem for Least Preferred Co-worker) Contingency Theory. The assumption of this theory is that a leader's contribution to successful performance by his/her group is determined both by the leader's traits and by various features of the situation. In other words, a leader's ability to lead is based on the task situation and the degree to which the leader's style, approach, and personality fit the group (Goldbach, 1989). LPC stands for the personality variable distinguishing between individuals concern for people (high LPC) and their concern for production (low LPC). Fiedler says, "If we wish to increase organizational and group effectiveness we must learn not only to train leaders more effectively but also how to build an organizational environment in which the leader can perform well." (Goldbach, 1989)

The summary of Fielder's theory predicts that low-LPC leaders (ones primarily task-oriented, will be more effective than high-LPC leaders (ones who are normally people-oriented) under conditions of either low or high situational control. The opposite is true when situational control is moderate. Fiedler's theory is consistent with modern leadership views because it directs attention to characteristics of leaders, situational factors, and reactions of subordinates (Greenberg and Baron, 1995).

Hersey and Blanchard's (1988) situational approach to leadership is also considered a contingency theory because it focuses on the best leadership style for a given situation. Their theory concentrates on the maturity of followers and the ability of a leader to adjust their leadership styles to accommodate the guidance and needs of the follower. According to Hersey and Blanchard, leaders must be able to:

- Diagnose the situation
- Identify the appropriate behavioral style
- Implement that response

To be effective, a leader must constantly reassess and implement the appropriate style, and provide the followers with necessary guidance and support to meet their needs.

Robert House developed the Path-Goal approach to leadership. This theory has the basic premise that subordinates will react favorably to a leader only if they perceive this person as helping them progress toward goals by clarifying rewards. In other words a leader must make clear the reasons for doing certain tasks and the leader must reduce or eliminate obstacles encountered. This will reinforce the perception of subordinates that hard work leading to good performance will be rewarded. According to House, the theory suggests that leaders can adopt four basic leadership styles. They are as follows:

- Instrumental - providing specific guidance, establishing schedules
- Supportive - establishing good relations with subordinates and satisfying their needs
- Participative - pattern which the leader consults with subordinates and includes them in decision-making
- Achievement-oriented - the leader sets challenging goals and seeks improvement in performance

These styles can be adapted at different times and situations and are not exclusive. An effective leader needs to be flexible in their utilization of these styles. The type of style used depends on the characteristics of the subordinates and on the work environment. In other words, some subordinates need structure, some need organization,

some need affiliation, and others do not. An effective leader needs to know which style is appropriate during any given situation.

Rensis Likert proposed a four system approach to leadership. The four categories were:

- Exploitive-authoritative
- Benevolent-authoritative
- Consultive
- Participative-group

Likert says that the participative-group approach is the most effective and organizations using this will be the most productive (Goldbach, 1989). Goldbach writes that Likert's four system approach would not work in the fire service because of our emergency situations. A leader could not adopt one system and maintain it. Goldbach goes on to conclude that the fire service leader's knowledge of the firefighter and the situation will determine the style to be used.

There are times when organizations function well despite leaders having no real influence or impact on followers. Kerr and Jermier describe this as their Substitutes for Leadership Theory. According to this theory, certain conditions occur where leaders have little or no impact on performance. Leadership under these conditions is not necessary. These conditions are:

- Various individual characteristics such as high knowledge, dedication, etc.
- Jobs structured in ways that direction and influence are redundant
- Various characteristics of organizations such as work norms, etc.

Podsakoff, Niehoff, MacKenzie, and Williams examined this theory and found that job performance and attitudes were closer associated to various substitutes than to leadership behaviors (Greenberg and Baron, 1995).

Vroom and Yetton developed the Normative Decision Theory that concluded leaders adopt one of five methods for decision-making. They range from decisions strictly by leaders to decisions made with full participation of subordinates. The five decision-making strategies are:

- Autocratic (AI) - leader solves problem or makes decision unilaterally, using available information
- Autocratic (AII) - leader obtains necessary information from subordinates but then makes decision unilaterally
- Consultative (CI) - leader shares the problem with subordinates individually, then makes decision unilaterally
- Consultative (CII) - leader shares the problem with subordinates in group meeting, then makes decision unilaterally
- Group Decision (GI) - leader shares problem with subordinates in a group meeting, then decision is reached through discussion to consensus

According to Vroom and Yetton, effective leaders must select the proper decision-making approach that will gain maximum benefits. This model shows the importance of subordinate participation in decisions. To select the best decision-making approach, a leader must answer certain questions about a situation. The questions relate to the quality of the decision and the acceptance of the decision. Once these questions are answered the proper decision-making approach is identified (Greenberg and Baron, 1995).

Beliefs and values are also critical in the leadership process. This pertains both to the leader and the subordinate. Beliefs are ideas that people have about the world around them and how it operates. Values are assessments of the goodness and badness of various features of one's life (Hitt, et al., 1983). Douglas McGregor describes beliefs and values in his Theory X and Theory Y. Leaders who have Theory X beliefs are pessimistic about their followers and feel they dislike work and want direction. Leaders who have Theory Y beliefs are optimistic about their followers and feel they have high quality workers.

A leader must adapt his/her style to the values, personalities, and motives of subordinates. Robert Tannenbaum and Warren Schmidt say that knowledge of a subordinate's needs and desires allows a leader to adopt a style that's effective. This reinforces the view that fire service leaders should temper their use of authority and direction based on the knowledge of the situation and the subordinate (Dessler, 1977). In addition, even in similar situations individuals are not necessarily treated the same.

In 1979, a conference was conducted by the California State Department of Education and it created a profile of leadership traits (Goldbach, 1989). The conference identified twelve positive leadership traits as follows:

- Respected by peers
- Risk taker
- Energetic, enthusiastic, persevering
- Knows what's going on
- Influences, may dominate, enjoys power
- Self-confident

- Responsible
- Many new ideas and insights
- Assertive
- Diplomatic
- Structured, organized
- Flexible

In addition to the above skills, the conference identified behavioral skill categories that leaders needed. These categories were, intellectual, personal, and interpersonal.

Intellectual behavioral skills:

- Figures out what's wrong
- Handles abstract ideas and sees broad prospective, big picture
- Plans and follows through
- Projects into the future, seeing consequences of decisions

Personal behavioral skills:

- Judges appropriateness of own decisions
- Copes with unpleasantness
- Able to absorb interpersonal stress
- Able to tolerate ambiguity, delay, and frustration

Interpersonal behavioral skills:

- Listens to, observes, and recognizes skills and abilities of others
- Interacts with others easily, inspires confidence in others
- Perceives and articulates unstated feelings, recognizes and states goals, problems, ideas, and interests of the group
- Capacity to structure social interaction systems for specific purposes
- Follows well
- Supports members of the group, accepts responsibility, able to determine appropriate behaviors and courses of action
- Organizes others, directs activities, delegates responsibility, establishes mood of the group

The only problem with the California Conference is that it is only from the leaders perspective. The identification of leadership traits did not include those members that were to be led. Goldbach believes that in order to identify effective leadership traits, the group that is to be led should also be identified by needs, desires, and goals.

PROCEDURES

The desired outcome of this research was to identify successful leadership traits, characteristics, or styles. In addition, determine the perception of leadership abilities on the LAFD, and if a problem exists, what can be done to correct it.

The research methods utilized were historical and descriptive. Historical research was used to review the information published about leadership and its theories. Descriptive research was used to determine the perception of leadership abilities on the LAFD.

Information was gathered using various books, publications, and papers published on the subject of leadership. The theories and leadership styles and behaviors were reviewed to ascertain the positive factors in successful and effective leadership. This information was utilized in developing the survey to gain LAFD members' perception of their leadership and what factors are important in that leadership. In addition, the survey addressed what could be undertaken to improve leadership on the department.

Once the literature was reviewed and the surveys completed (Appendices A, B, C), it was given randomly to 300 members. This accounts for roughly ten percent of the department. Of the 300 surveys, 157 surveys were sent back completed. The surveys were tallied and results were recorded.

The results were analyzed and addressed. Certain traits and characteristics were identified and compared to the literature reviewed. Recommendations were made as to the improvement of leadership skills and training.

The limitations of the survey were threefold. First, the number of surveys returned was just over fifty percent. Second, was that of apathy and/or disenchantment

with the system. By this I mean a feeling of things will never change. Its always been this way and nothing I can do will change it. Third, was the fact that only two surveys sent to chief officers were returned by non-field chief officers. All other surveys were returned by field chief officers. This narrowed the bureau commander question on the chief officers survey and possibly slanted that question toward the “very satisfied” response.

RESULTS

Research Questions:

1. What is the definition of leadership?

Leadership is an activity that consists of influencing other people’s behavior, individually and/or as a group, toward the achievement of desired objectives.

2. What leadership theories and concepts exist?

There are many leadership theories. Over the years thoughts about leadership have changed and new theories added. The “Great Man Theory” was the original train of thought, followed by the “Trait Approach”.

Leadership behavior theories emerged such as the Ohio and Michigan State Studies of task versus relationship behavior.

Contingency theories emerged such as Fiedler’s Contingency Theory describing leaders being task-oriented or relationship-oriented. This involved leader-member relations, task structure, and leader position power. Other types of theories included Hersey and Blanchard’s Situational Theory that involves relationship and task behavior.

It also deals with follower task and psychological maturity. The last such theory was the Path-Goal Theory that involved supportive, directive, participative, and achievement-oriented behavior. It also included characteristics of subordinates as well as characteristics of tasks and environment.

Leadership styles such as the Vroom and Yetten model are prevalent in leadership circles. This model involved the styles of autocratic, consultative and democratic leadership. In addition, the situational aspects of subordinate acceptance, decision quality requirements, and time constraints are included.

3. What are the traits and characteristics of an effective leader?

Mr. Reipe writing for Firehouse magazine lists qualities for successful leaders.

They are as follows:

- Dedication- a sense of mission
- Human touch- compassion, empathy
- Command presence- appearance, demeanor
- Professional competence- accomplished
- Loyalty- commitment to others
- Humility- modesty
- Impartiality- fairness
- Cheerful optimism- positive attitude

Additionally, Kirkpatrick and Locke came to the conclusion that traits do matter.

Their list of traits are as follows:

- Drive- desire for achievement

- Honesty and integrity- trustworthy
- Leadership motivation- exercise influence over others; shared goals
- Self-confidence- trust in own abilities
- Cognitive ability- intelligence
- Knowledge of business- knowledge of industry; technical
- Creativity- originality
- Flexibility- adapting

Other characteristics of successful leaders include but is not limited to vision, purpose, taking risks, courage, inspiring, forward looking, and enthusiastic. A study by R.M. Stogdill in 1974, identified five physical traits, four intelligence and ability traits, sixteen personality traits, six task-related characteristics, and nine social characteristics, all related to a persons ability to lead. Trait theory was prevalent in the 1950's and lost its favor after that. However, new research shows there is a correlation to traits or characteristics and successful leaders. Still, traits by themselves are not enough, knowing when and how to use certain leadership styles is also extremely important.

4. How are the leadership abilities of LAFD officers perceived by LAFD members?

The leadership abilities of officers of the LAFD are perceived differently by and for different ranks. The results are based on random sampling of 300 surveys. Only 157 were returned and are reflected in the results. Three groups were included in the survey:

- Firefighters, engineers, apparatus operators
- Captains
- Chief Officers

The first group surveyed consisted of firefighters, engineers, and apparatus operators (Appendix D). One hundred and five surveys were returned. These members seemed satisfied with their immediate supervisors, immediate battalion chief, and with LAFD chief officers in general. A surprise finding was the very high percentage of satisfaction with chief officers. The survey also showed that members were split on the leadership abilities of all LAFD captains and bureau commanders. Members showed a large percentage of dissatisfaction with the Chief Engineer. Members also felt that one is not necessarily born a leader and leadership can be learned. The survey showed that the main ways to improve leadership on the LAFD was to hire and promote qualified individuals and to give formalized training in leadership and people skills. Members felt that the most important traits for leaders are honesty, integrity, and competency.

The second group consisted of Captains (Appendix E). Thirty-eight surveys were returned and included in the project. The Captains as a group felt overall satisfaction with their immediate battalion chiefs. In addition, they felt overall satisfaction with LAFD chief officers. Satisfaction with bureau commanders was also overall satisfactory with a slightly closer margin. Captains were overall dissatisfied with the Chief Engineer by a large margin. Captains felt that leadership is something learned and not born with. They also felt that the ways to improve leadership on the department was to hire and promote qualified members, maintain standards, and provide for leadership training. Captains also felt that the most important traits for a leader are Integrity, honesty, and competency.

The last group surveyed were chief officers. Fourteen surveys were returned. Chief officers felt overall satisfied with captains on the LAFD but with only a slight

margin. Satisfaction with other chief officers was evident. Chief officers were satisfied with bureau commanders with a high “very satisfied” ratio. There was a slight limitation of the survey in this area because all but two of the surveys returned were from chief officers in the Emergency Services Bureau, under the command of one specific bureau commander. Therefore this high rating probably only reflects the chief officers opinion of that one bureau commander. Chief officers were also overall dissatisfied with the Chief Engineer by a large margin. This finding was surprising because chief officers traditionally have been supporters of the Chief Engineer. The survey showed chief officers felt leadership is learned and not necessarily something someone is born with. They felt that the most important traits for a leader were integrity, honesty, competency, command presence, and dependability. Chief officers felt that the way to improve leadership on the LAFD was through maintaining standards, training, and education.

One of the most surprising findings is the similarity in all ranks for the most important traits of a leader and the ways to improve leadership on the LAFD. The survey showed an overwhelming concern for honesty, integrity, and competency. In addition, the support for hiring and promotion of qualified members and maintaining standards was evident in all ranks.

5. What if anything should or could be done to increase leadership abilities on the LAFD?

The research showed that the topic of leadership had a tremendous amount of information which includes many theories and styles. Although the surveys showed that most members are satisfied with the leadership on the department, it also showed that

leadership skills and abilities can be improved upon. Several positive traits and characteristics of leaders were identified by the literature review. The traits included honesty, integrity, experience, consistency, competency, and dependability. The survey identified several ways leadership can be improved on the LAFD. These include, hiring and promoting qualified individuals, maintaining standards, training in leadership and people skills, consistency, common goals, and honesty. These traits and characteristics along with the suggested improvement methods identified by the members should provide an avenue for the LAFD to pursue leadership improvement and effectiveness.

DISCUSSION

The title of the last class of the Executive Fire Officer Program incorporates the term leadership. The Executive Leadership Course goes into great detail on the topic of leadership and therefore it is appropriate that this project deals with this subject.

The literature review identified many theories and styles of leadership. It discussed in detail the various aspects of leadership and successful leaders.

The “Great Man Theory” was discussed and although there are individuals that seemed to be born leaders, this is not the norm and leadership can be learned. The “Trait Theory” indicated that individuals had certain traits that made them successful leaders. This theory has made a comeback in current leadership study circles. Leaders do appear to have certain traits that make them successful and effective. That is not to say that individuals cannot learn these traits or at least improve upon them. Contingency theories seem to indicate that certain styles of leadership are more effective in certain situations. This seems to make the most sense in the fire service because of the nature of our

business. Situations always change and therefore leaders must utilize different leadership styles at different times. Situational leadership indicates that leadership style depends on what type of direction followers need. This is also important in the fire service because of the technological skills involved. Certain followers are better skilled and can be depended on to do more tasks without direct supervision. Others such as probationary firefighters, need direct supervision and guidance.

The Path-Goal Theory is one that is very closely related to the fire service. This theory suggests that leaders can only motivate subordinates to the degree that the subordinates feel the leaders are helping them to achieve their valued goals. Firefighters are individuals that can figure anything out. If an officer is trying to snowball them, or lie to them, they will have no respect for that leader, and not be motivated to perform. In addition, if firefighters feel that an officer is competent and is looking out for their safety and wellbeing, they will do anything for that officer.

The areas of autocratic versus democratic leadership style is pretty self-explanatory, however, officers seem to overlook its simplicity. During emergency situations, autocratic leadership is expected, but when decisions are not crucial and involve the needs and concerns of subordinates, they should be included in the decision. Unfortunately many officers feel if they do not make the decision alone, their authority is being undermined.

My experience on the LAFD had shown that certain leaders are transformational. They bring with them a certain charisma that enables them to make changes and implement programs based on their names alone. They have a vision and a plan of carrying out their vision. They are honest, have integrity, and are very competent

individuals. This sounds a lot like the results of the leadership survey in which these traits were identified for successful leaders. There is one area that I feel is not really addressed in transformational leadership. This is the area of a leader providing a transformation that is negative. In other words, a corporate raider type that makes changes for the perceived benefits of an organization, when in reality it is not. These negative transformational leaders usually surface for monetary or political reasons. This type of perception may be the reason that the surveys conducted showed such a poor leadership ability result for the Chief Engineer.

This project has provided me with several insights in the area of leadership. First, a leader must do the right thing. They must treat their employees the way they would want to be treated. Values must be established and leaders must set the example. Group discussions must occur so that good communication takes place and small important items are not overlooked. A leader must prevent the formation of cliques and provide an environment that is inclusive. A leader must be truthful, and what Rommel said about soldiers is true for firefighters. They have a good nose for truth. A leader cannot sacrifice the followers for his/her personal gain. A leader must above all maintain integrity and principles. Take care of ones followers and serve while you lead. Provide subordinates an example to follow that shows the fire service occupation is not a job but a calling.

The implications of leadership to the LAFD is profound. As in any organization, leadership determines its course and effectiveness. Leadership is all the more important in the fire service because of the emergency nature of the profession. In addition,

leadership on the LAFD is extremely important because of the size of the city, the number of incidents, and the large organizational structure of the department.

Although leadership is always discussed both in and out of the fire service, we must be sure that it is addressed. The results of this research and specifically the survey showed that even though there is an overall satisfaction with the LAFD leadership, there is definitely room for improvement.

The study showed that there were suggestions members made as to leadership improvement. These suggestions come from members that are doing the job both as subordinates and supervisors, therefore they have practical roots. Utilizing the knowledge gained by the research as well as implementing suggestions for leadership improvement will have a tremendous positive impact for the LAFD.

Without officers that have good leadership abilities, the fire service and specifically the LAFD will lose effectiveness and respect. Worst case scenario is lives will be lost.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This research provided the groundwork for several recommendations. These recommendations if implemented will enhance the leadership abilities of officers on the LAFD and provide effective leadership into the next millennium.

A comprehensive study of the LAFD needs to be conducted to determine what in leadership can be improved upon. Leadership needs to be addressed and continued training given.

Officers need to do a self-evaluation and identify the areas they can improve and then go about the process of improving them. Many training programs have been conducted in the past in which officers attended. However, they did not practically apply the learned concepts and they went back to their old ways.

The department needs to maintain high standards for hiring and promotion, and therefore establish a pool of highly qualified individuals that can be training as highly qualified leaders.

The last recommendation is already in place for the LAFD and that is the implementation of officer training to address leadership. This is currently being done for both captains and chief officers. The training should be continued and possibly expanded.

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Appendix A

LEADERSHIP SURVEY FOR FIREFIGHTERS/APPARATUS OPERATORS/ENGINEERS

The following survey is part of a research project for the National Fire Academy. It is strictly anonymous. This survey does not reflect the official position of the Los Angeles City Fire Department or the City of Los Angeles. All information gathered is strictly for statistical purposes.

Please answer questions one through eight by circling the answer you feel appropriate.

1. How would you rate your satisfaction with the leadership abilities of your immediate supervisor?

Very Satisfied
Satisfied
Not Satisfied

2. How would you rate your satisfaction with the leadership abilities of your Battalion Chief?

Very Satisfied
Satisfied
Not Satisfied

3. How would you rate your overall satisfaction with the leadership abilities of Captains on the LAFD?

Very Satisfied
Satisfied
Not Satisfied

4. How would you rate your overall satisfaction with the leadership abilities of Chief Officers (except Bureau Commanders)?

Very Satisfied
Satisfied
Not Satisfied

5. How would you rate your overall satisfaction with the leadership abilities of Bureau Commanders?

Very Satisfied
Satisfied
Not Satisfied

6. How would you rate your satisfaction with the leadership abilities of the Chief Engineer?

Very Satisfied
Satisfied
Not Satisfied

7. Do you feel leadership is something one is born with?

Yes
No

8. Do you feel leadership can be learned?

Yes
No

Please answer question number nine by filling in your answer.

9. How can leadership on the LAFD be improved?

Please answer question number ten by rating the top five in rank order.

10. What are the most important traits for a leader on the LAFD?

Appendix B

LEADERSHIP SURVEY FOR CAPTAINS

The following survey is part of a research project for the National Fire Academy. It is strictly anonymous. This survey does not reflect the official position of the Los Angeles City Fire Department or the City of Los Angeles. All information gathered is strictly for statistical purposes.

Please answer questions one through seven circling the answer you feel appropriate.

11. How would you rate your satisfaction with the leadership abilities of your Battalion Chief?

Very Satisfied
Satisfied
Not Satisfied

12. How would you rate your satisfaction with the leadership abilities of Captains on the LAFD?

Very Satisfied
Satisfied
Not Satisfied

13. How would you rate your satisfaction with the leadership abilities of Chief Officers on the LAFD (except Bureau Commanders)?

Very Satisfied
Satisfied
Not Satisfied

14. How would you rate your satisfaction with the leadership abilities of Bureau Commanders on the LAFD?

Very Satisfied
Satisfied
Not Satisfied

15. How would you rate your satisfaction with the leadership abilities of the Chief Engineer?

Very Satisfied
Satisfied
Not Satisfied

16. Do you feel leadership is something one is born with?

Yes
No

17. Do you feel leadership can be learned?

Yes
No

Please answer question number eight by filling in your answer.

18. How can leadership on the LAFD be improved?

Please answer question number nine by rating the top five in rank order.

19. What are the most important traits for a leader on the LAFD?

Appendix C

LEADERSHIP SURVEY FOR CHIEF OFFICERS

The following survey is part of a research project for the National Fire Academy. It is strictly anonymous. This survey does not reflect the official position of the Los Angeles City Fire Department or the City of Los Angeles. All information gathered is strictly for research and statistical purposes.

Please answer questions one through seven circling the answer you feel appropriate.

20. How would you rate your satisfaction with the leadership abilities of Captains on the LAFD?

Very Satisfied
Satisfied
Not Satisfied

21. How would you rate your satisfaction with the leadership abilities of Chief Officers on the LAFD (except Bureau Commanders)?

Very Satisfied
Satisfied
Not Satisfied

22. How would you rate your satisfaction with the leadership abilities of Bureau Commanders on the LAFD?

Very Satisfied
Satisfied
Not Satisfied

23. How would you rate your satisfaction with the leadership abilities of the Chief Engineer?

Very Satisfied
Satisfied
Not Satisfied

24. Do you feel leadership is something one is born with?

Yes

No

25. Do you feel leadership can be learned?

Yes

No

Please answer question number seven by filling in your answer.

26. How can leadership on the LAFD be improved?

Please answer question number eight by rating the top five in rank order.

27. What are the most important traits for a leader on the LAFD?

Appendix D

SURVEY RESULTS

FIREFIGHTERS, ENGINEERS, AND APPARATUS OPERATORS

- Leadership abilities of immediate supervisor

Very Satisfied	12%
Satisfied	64%
Not Satisfied	24%

- Leadership abilities of immediate Battalion Chief

Very Satisfied	40%
Satisfied	48%
Not satisfied	12%

- Leadership abilities of LAFD Captains overall

Very Satisfied	0%
Satisfied	48%
Not Satisfied	52%

- Leadership abilities of Chief Officers (Except Bureau Commanders)

Very Satisfied	8%
Satisfied	64%
Not Satisfied	28%

- Leadership abilities of Bureau Commanders

Very Satisfied	0%
Satisfied	56%
Not Satisfied	44%

- Leadership abilities of the Chief Engineer

Very Satisfied	0%
Satisfied	20%
Not Satisfied	80%

- Is leadership something one is born with?

Yes	28%
No	78%

- Can leadership be learned?

Yes	84%
No	16%

- How can leadership on the LAFD be improved?
(answer in rank order for number of responses)

1. Promote and hire qualified people
2. Training in leadership skills
3. Training in people skills
4. Revise testing process
5. Training in communication
6. Training in morale boosting
7. Education/Degrees

- What are the most important traits for a leader?
(answers are the top five in rank order)

1. Honesty
2. Integrity
3. Competent
4. Experience
5. Consistent

Appendix E

SURVEY RESULTS

CAPTAINS

- Leadership abilities of immediate Battalion Chief

Very Satisfied	20%
Satisfied	60%
Not satisfied	20%

- Leadership abilities of LAFD Captains overall

Very Satisfied	1%
Satisfied	65%
Not Satisfied	34%

- Leadership abilities of Chief Officers (Except Bureau Commanders)

Very Satisfied	10 %
Satisfied	60%
Not Satisfied	30%

- Leadership abilities of Bureau Commanders

Very Satisfied	10%
Satisfied	50%
Not Satisfied	40%

- Leadership abilities of the Chief Engineer

Very Satisfied	0%
Satisfied	15%
Not Satisfied	85%

- Is leadership something one is born with?

Yes	21%
No	79%

- Can leadership be learned?

Yes	90%
No	10%

- How can leadership on the LAFD be improved?
(answer in rank order for number of responses)
 1. Promote and hire qualified people
 2. Maintain standards
 3. Training
 4. Consistency
 5. Have common goals
 6. Enforce rules and regulations
 7. Accountability
 8. Chiefs back Captains

- What are the most important traits for a leader?
(answers are the top five in rank order)
 1. Integrity
 2. Honesty
 3. Competent
 4. Consistent
 5. Experience

Appendix F

SURVEY RESULTS

CHIEF OFFICERS

- Leadership abilities of LAFD Captains overall

Very Satisfied	0%
Satisfied	57%
Not Satisfied	43%

- Leadership abilities of Chief Officers (Except Bureau Commanders)

Very Satisfied	5 %
Satisfied	61%
Not Satisfied	34%

- Leadership abilities of Bureau Commanders

Very Satisfied	30%
Satisfied	55%
Not Satisfied	15%

- Leadership abilities of the Chief Engineer

Very Satisfied	0%
Satisfied	19%
Not Satisfied	81%

- Is leadership something one is born with?

Yes	12%
No	88%

- Can leadership be learned?

Yes	96%
No	4%

- How can leadership on the LAFD be improved?
(answer in rank order for number of responses)
 1. Maintain standards
 2. Training
 3. Education
 4. Honesty
 5. Consistency
 6. Enforce rules and regulations
 7. Need departmental vision

- What are the most important traits for a leader?
(answers are the top five in rank order)
 1. Integrity
 2. Honesty
 3. Competent
 4. Command Presence
 5. Dependability